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On State Repression of Journalists:

A Comparison of Egypt's Treatment of Print Journalists and Bloggers, 2004-2008

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On State Repression of Journalists:

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by

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On State Repression of Journalists:

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In 2008, the Committee for the Protection of Journalists reports, Internet journalists comprised the worldwide plurality of imprisoned media workers for the first time. Why are Internet journalists subject to higher levels of repression than journalists working other medium? My arguments build on literature concerning institutional mechanisms of control in authoritarian regimes, violent conflict and social movement repression. In this report I examine Egypt from 2004 through 2008, a period of high political activism and a corresponding rise in state repressive action. Five years of English-language wire service news reports indicate that a greater percentage of bloggers in Egypt were victims of state repression than print journalists over this period. This pattern can be explained in party by corporatism in the print media sector and journalists' involvement with opposition movements. Finally, it appears that the state is using the judicial system as a mechanism of punishment; adding to the growing body of literature detailing the judicialization of politics in Egypt.

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Introduction

In 2008, the Committee for the Protection of Journalists reported that Internet journalists comprised the worldwide plurality of imprisoned media workers for the first time.[1] Such a statistic gives pause to those that question the political impact of bloggers and others who use the Internet to share information to shed light on current events. Do authoritarian regimes, those that are most likely to take repressive action against members of the press, see the bloggers' activities as a serious threat to their power? Are bloggers political activists, have they fomented social movements in some places? Or, are bloggers simply inviting higher levels of repression by substantially going beyond the norms of political speech? In short: what explains the higher level of repression against bloggers?

Political scientists and others who remain skeptical of the political impact of blogs raise important points: the vast majority of weblog authors worldwide do not address political topics and, of those that do, few regularly update their sites for extended periods of time. Additionally, in much of the developing world access to technology is low; bloggers in these countries have small domestic readerships and are thus limited in the number of opinions their writings might change or the number of individuals they might mobilize. Nonetheless, the governments of the world have responded to those who use

[1] The Committee for the Protection of Journalists, "CPJ's 2008 prison census: Online and in jail," available at: http://cpj.org/reports/2008/12/cpjs-2008-prison-census-online-and-in-jail.php [last accessed 03 Nov 2009].

this novel media to share political information and opinions with the highest level of repression.

The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) identifies Egypt in its report about this emerging trend. At the end of 2008, according to the CPJ, one Egyptian media worker was in prison. Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman began a four-year prison sentence in November 2006 for using his blog to voice criticism of al-Azhar, the prominent Islamic university in Cairo, and President Hosni Mubarak.[2] His case and the birth of the Egyptian 'blogosphere' more generally caught the attention of many in the western media and some in the academy. Suleiman may have been the lone Egyptian blogger in jail at the end of 2008, yet other major stories of state action against bloggers and print journalists indicate that repression in this country is more wide-spread than reported.

In this paper I use the Egyptian case to study the worldwide snapshot offered by the CPJ. The five year period from the rise of the Egyptian Movement for Change (also known as Kefaya, meaning 'enough') in 2004 through the events surrounding the 2008-2009 Israeli war on Gaza has been characterized by high levels of both contentious politics and repressive response from the state. These events enable me to examine state treatment of bloggers and print journalists in a more in depth manner, as well as across time. Have more bloggers suffered repression at the hands of the Egyptian state than print journalists? Are there differences in the type or degree of repression employed

[2] The Committee for the Protection of Journalists, "2008 prison census: 125 journalists jailed" available at: http://cpj.org/imprisoned/2008.php#egypt [last accessed 03 Nov 2009].

against these different classes of journalists? How does the interaction of media and social movements shape the response of the state?

I seek to answer these questions in three sections. First, I examine two strains of political science literature that explore the causes of repression and provide useful bases for developing hypotheses about the causes of variation in repression across journalistic media. Many works on 'enduring authoritarianism,' a response to works on democratization, explore the relationship between repression and institutions. Governments reorganize old institutions or build new ones in order to embed opposition leaders and movements in the state. I argue such institutional methods of restricting political behavior may apply to journalists as well. A second literature explains violence during contentious politics and more severe instances of conflict. In such periods, violence, ranging from detention to homicide, may be "indiscriminate" or "selective." Explanations of "selective" violence, the specific targeting of dissidents and other transgressors, offer particular insight into the choices states make in targeting certain journalists and not others with repressive mechanisms. Through this critical examination of the literature I develop specific hypotheses about the determinants of state repression.

Next, I turn to the specifics of Egyptian politics, media and repression between 2004 and 2008. I begin by examining recent developments in Egypt through secondary sources. This picture provides me with the context necessary to examine specific patterns of repression against print journalists and bloggers. Subsequently, I collect and present data on repression of the Egyptian print and Internet journalists. Reports from three western wire services enable me to count cases of repression against the two groups at

question in this analysis and learn about the tactics the Egyptian state deploys against them. I use these data to test the hypothesis developed in the first section. In the final section of the paper, I use the theory and evidence from the earlier chapters to draw tentative conclusions about the broader implications of this research and offer directions for future research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review and Hypotheses

There are proverbs in many languages about the relative strength of the pen and the sword. Napoleon Bonaparte saw this relationship in light of the mass media; he is credited with saying that "four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets."[3] Yet, this quotation alone does not indicate whether he refers to his means of control over those who lived in France or, more likely, to the ways in which the populace sought to threaten his hold on power. Political Science has long recognized the tension between the power of the pen and the sword, and the efforts of both the state and society to maintain and expand their power through discourse and violence. This chapter seeks to further elucidate this relationship, in light of new technologies, through examining literature about the media and politics, enduring authoritarianism and political violence.

Politics and the Mass Media

The birth of the Internet led to a flurry of predictions by politicians, political commentators and academics about the beneficial changes the new technology might precipitate around the world. Those who focus on existing democracies argue that the Internet can make debate fuller, more pluralistic and ultimately lead to more representative policy outcomes. Those who focus on the decline of authoritarianism see

[3] Louis Edward Ingelhart, *Press Freedoms: A Descriptive Calendar of Concepts, Interpretations, Evens, and Court Actions from 4000 B.C. to the Present* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 179.

the Internet as a tool dissidents can use to secretly develop (pro-democratic) ideas, mobilize contentious politics and then unleash social movements only after they are too large and powerful for regimes to crush.[4]

The optimistic expectations about the effect of the Internet on democracy and democratization are based on assumptions about both the nature of new media and the way it will be used. The most nuanced examples of this argument rest explicitly on Jürgen Habermas's arguments about the public sphere.[5] The public sphere, as a concept, is principally viewed as a discursive space, composed of face-to-face discussion and debates in the mass media, which brings the people of a democracy together to deliberate on the issues of the day.[6] The Internet, they say, provides the potential for many-to-many communication in a way that could replicate, and some argue even improve upon, the face-to-face discussions Habermas pointed to in the coffeehouses and salons of eighteenth century Europe.

The optimists also assumed that the Internet would quickly become available to many and that this collection of individuals would choose to use the Internet for political purposes. More serious scholars of the public sphere, however, recognize that individuals interact with media technology, thus shaping its social and political impact.

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[4] Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas, *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 1-5.

[5] It is perhaps relevant that the release of the first English-language translation of his major work on this topic came at the end of the twentieth century. Thus the revival of this approach in the American academy coincided with the emergence of the Internet as a topic of study in social science literature. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger, with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989 [1962]).

[6] Ibid; see also Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), PGS.

Habermas felt the public spheres he studied "dissolved" when people stopped participating in debate after mass media mixed the political and entertainment, and as the importance of corporations increased in society.[7] Excluded voices may sometimes bring overlooked issues and viewpoints to broader attention as a result of changing media technologies. More often, however, political and economic elites will take advantage of changes and further dominate the discussion.[8] Many states limit the access of the citizens have to the Internet. Commercial interests are also becoming powerful online actors.[9] In addition, the diversity of opinions and heterogeneity of Internet users across the globe is leading to social fragmentation rather than unifying political debate.[10] The absence of improved and new electronic democracies around the world demonstrates the inaccuracy of such assumptions.

The errors made by such optimists are not a reason to discount the role of the press in political outcomes. Political scientists, like Napoleon, have recognized the power states may gain through the use of and control over information sharing institutions and mechanisms. Benedict Anderson, who coined the phrase "print capitalism," is well-known for offering a thesis about the importance of the printing press

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[7] Ibid., 140.

[8] Ibid., 175-176; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 109-142; Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 49-90.

[9] Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinski, Jonathan Zittrain, eds., *Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008); Habermas, 175-176; Zizi Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere," in *New Media and Society* 3, no. 1 (March 2001), 9-27.

[10] Bruce Bimber, "The Internet and Political Transformation: Populism, Community and Accelerated Pluralism," in *Polity*, 31, no. 1 (Autumn 1998), 133-160; Leah Lievrouw, "Our Own Devices: Heterotopic Communication, Discourse, and Culture in the Information Society," in *The Information Society* 14, no. 2 (June 1998), 83-96.

in the rise of nationalism. Anderson was not the first to credit mass media the ability to foster a sense of community; in 1958, Daniel Lerner anticipated this line of thought. In his work on the modernization of the Middle East Lerner writes that the expansion of "psychic mobility" enabled a larger number of people than ever before to "imagin[e] themselves as strange persons in strange situations, places and times."[11] Lerner argues that long-distance travel and mass media – beginning with the novel and later, radio and television series, as well as movies – enabled average people "to imagine how life is organized in different lands."[12] These developments led people to better understand those who were different and also to recognize the similarities that exist across cultures leading to a common worldwide identity.[13]

Anderson's work offers a similar understanding of the power of the press, while moving away from the universalism of Lerner's approach. For Anderson, capitalism in combination with the printing press created a commercial market for printed media. These materials led to the development of common European languages among people who previously knew only the vernaculars of their small localities.[14] Thus, those who lived in the broader territories that became today's European nation-states could 'imagine' a "deep, horizontal comradeship" with those whom they shared a language despite never having any contact with the vast majority of those in their community.[15]

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[11] Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: Free Press, 1958), 52.
[12] Ibid., 54.
[13] Ibid., 52-54.
[14] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 1991), 5-7, 44-46.
[15] Ibid., 7.

The new European nation-states promulgated these "imagined communities" at home and in their colonies, according to Anderson. New modes of transportation, primarily railroads, increased the connection between the center and the periphery, modern bureaucracies and centrally-coordinated education systems expanded the ability of the state to mediate language. These institutions further deepened the hold of common languages across the territories controlled by a central state.[16] Scholars who follow Anderson recognize the importance of 'print-capitalism' in providing the mass media a central role in the creation and maintenance of the modern system of nation-states born in Europe and in spreading this system through imperialist practices around the globe.[17]

When the state does not control mass media, they can become the means by which people challenge the state and other dominant actors in society. Indeed, Anderson cites Martin Luther's theses, which challenged the authority of the Catholic Church, as among earliest examples of print-capitalism.[18] He credits the works of this pivotal author in European history with tripling the number of books published in German during the first half of the sixteenth century and describes Luther as "the first best-selling author."[19] Sidney Tarrow expands on Anderson's thesis about the role of mass media in building popular politics. For Tarrow mass media fostered 'imagined communities' which in turn allowed people to "join across wide social and geographic divides in national social

[16] Ibid., 115-116.
[17] SEE: James Gelvin, "Modernity *and* its Discontents: on the Durability of Nationalism in the Arab Middle East," *Nations and Nationalisms* 5 (1999); Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[18] Anderson, 39-40.
[19] Ibid., 39.

movements."[20] Newspapers, Tarrow argues, have long been key mechanisms for the creation of communal identity and contentious politics.[21]

Scholars who focus on authoritarian regimes note that states maintain similar levels of control over the Internet and more traditional media. Three reasons explain this. First, usage levels in much of the developing world remain low; in many places this is because states keep prices artificially high. The wealthy, who have access to the Internet in such circumstances, already have access to alternate sources of information through regular contact with family and friends who live abroad, as well as international travel and educational opportunities.[22]

Additionally, states invest in technologies for filtering the Internet content those within their borders can access. The strength of these measures does vary across countries, but Internet filtering has largely kept pace with the technological means for circumventing state attempts to restrict access. Although the most determined and technologically savvy bypass the filtering technology, the vast majority of Internet users surf the Internet within limits the state determines.[23] Authoritarian states make analog efforts to the electronic filtering of the Internet. Some states block international periodicals and satellite channels from entering their borders after uncomplimentary or otherwise objectionable material is published or broadcast. Reports indicate that some

[20] Tarrow, 44.
[21] Ibid., 45-47.
[22] Kalathil and Boas, 142.
[23] Deibert, et al., 23.

countries physically cut offending articles from newspapers before they reach newsstands.[24]

Finally, authoritarian regimes employ legal and extra-legal methods to punish those who share information online much as they do to those who produce content for more mainstream media. Singapore, for example, passed new laws in the early 1990s to regulate Internet use and prosecutions under this law in the next century followed on the heels of similar prosecution of international newspapers.[25] In Egypt, one of a very few Arab countries without systematic Internet filters, the state has sought to encourage self-censorship online through the use of a "few well-publicized crackdowns."[26] The regime employs similar techniques for promulgating self-censorship among print journalists, using "repression and brutality against dissenting journalists" to create an environment of fear and encourage self-censorship.[27]

I return to the particulars of the Egyptian case in the second chapter. For now, the point remains that states recognize that they can enhance their own power through the use of media. At the same time, however, those who seek to challenge the state can also strengthen their position through the use of media. States, particularly of the authoritarian variety, therefore seek to limit the uses of the media by the public. In the next two sections I review literature concerning the role of institutions and information in

[24] Kalathil and Boas, 121.

[25] Gary Rodan, "Asia and the International Press: The Political Significance of the Expanding Markets" in *Democratization and the Media*, ed. Vicky Randall (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 125-154; Cherian George, *Contentious Journalism and the Internet: Towards Democratic Discourse in Malaysia and Singapore* (Seattle: Singapore University Press, 2006).

[26] Kalathil and Boas, 106.

[27] Mamoun Fandy, *(Un)Civil War of Words: Media and Politics in the Arab World (*Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 31.

violent conflicts to devise hypotheses about the particular mechanisms authoritarian states use to limit information sharing across two media – print journalism and blogging.

Institutions and Authoritarianism

At the end of the twentieth century, much comparative politics literature examined the causes of democratization. This focus was the result of real world conditions, known as the third wave of democratization. The five volumes authored by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead tracked the transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 further corroborated the transitions paradigm and provided more cases to explore the causes of democratization.

Other scholars recognize that the democratic transitions are not inevitable and believe the discipline focuses on potential signs of transition at the expense of other important political phenomena. Lucian Pye, for example, encourages his fellow members of the American Political Science Association to examine the "crisis of authoritarianism."[28] He argues that technology and modernization, more generally, require authoritarian regimes to change the ways in which they have used the tools of coercion and legitimacy to maintain control.[29] Scholars of regions where evidence of democratization was largely absent took up his call and asked: what are the reasons that authoritarian regimes endure? Many of those who offered answers point to both the role

[28] Lucian W. Pye, "Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism" in *The American Political Science Review* 84, no. 1 (Mar 1990), 3-19.
[29] Ibid., 9, 11-12.

institutions of repression and institutions for controlling the spread of information play in strong authoritarian states.

Robert Dahl's classic work, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, remains the starting point for many discussions of both democratization and enduring authoritarianism.[30] Dahl provides a thorough definition of democracy or rather, polyarchy. These various characteristics can largely be represented by two dimensions, that of "public contestation" and "the right to participate."[31] Polyarchies are those regimes that score highly on both dimensions, while in "closed hegemonies" leaders are not chosen openly, nor are citizens able to participate in the process.[32]

Dahl offers two different variables to explain regime transitions. He assumes that the inclusion of forces opposed to the current government drives democratization. Dahl argues governments permit different levels of inclusion in response to changes in the "costs of toleration" and the "costs of repression."[33] Polyarchies are most likely to emerge when the costs of toleration fall below those of repression. Authoritarian government can be expected to endure when the cost of toleration exceed the costs of repression.[34]

Dahl's analysis leaves important questions unanswered: what determines changing costs of repression and toleration? Pye wrote that technological change is one factor that leads authoritarian regimes to change tactics of control. Blogs, unlike printed

[30] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971).
[31] Ibid., 5.
[32] Ibid., 7.
[33] Ibid., 15.
[34] Ibid., 14-16.

media, do not offer a physical document and most bloggers do not have official office space or editors, like most newspaper and magazine reporters. Structural differences like these that vary across media relocate the border between state and society. As a result the effective tactics of control available to the state change and likely come with different costs. Jill Crystal and Eva Bellin examine the tools available to the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and shed light on the relative price tags of these tactics.[35]

Many scholars consider the repressive arm of Middle Eastern states to be strong and point to the unique role that "police, jails and fear" play in maintaining regimes of the region.[36] Crystal dates the emergence of such a system to the colonial period and argues that coercive institutions "seem to develop their own momentum."[37] She further argues that technological changes do not pose a challenge to the state, but rather enhance its surveillance powers and violence, reducing costs and allowing the military and security services to grow larger and stronger.[38] Bellin agrees that the Middle Eastern regimes tend to have strong coercive apparatuses, but argues consistent economic support dispersed through patronage ties within these institutions, rather than institutional 'stickiness,' cause pro-authoritarian behavior by the military and security services.[39]

Bellin further argues that the costs of building and maintaining strong repressive institutions are not the only ones faced by regimes. Costs also increase with the size of

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[35] Jill Crystal, "Authoritarianism and its Adversaries in the Arab World," *World Politics* 46, no. 2 (Jan 1994); Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective" *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (Jan 2004).

[36] Crystal, 263.

[37] Ibid., 282.

[38] Ibid., 282-283.

[39] Bellin, 145.

the opposition that must be repressed. Large-scale violent repression is a cost states rarely choose to pay, unless the costs of toleration include the very existence of the current regime.[40]

States use institutions to prevent the emergence of such challenges, thus reducing the need for repression. Governments resort to violent methods only when institutional mechanisms fail to curb threatening behavior. According to Crystal, states use patrimonial social structures, such as the 'primordial' ties of tribe and sect, as well as socio-economic cleavages, to distribute economic incentives and build support. States use these incentives and their ability to withhold them from certain groups, to encourage social groups themselves to discourage and even police dissent.[41]

Such informal, or at least less official, patrimonial networks do exist and strengthen many authoritarian regimes. Bellin points to them in her discussion of the military, however, she privileges the relationship between civil society and the state over socioeconomic cleavages in explaining the institutional methods of control. Bellin agrees with many regional specialists; Arab governments neutralize the threat posed by civil society by corporatizing emergent groups. Governments corporatize social groups by enmeshing them in existing government institutions in order to monitor and shape the behavior of these groups.[42] When such tactics do not fully protect the regime, I expect that it employs violent repression for protection.

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[40] Ibid., 146-147.
[41] Crystal, 269-277.
[42] Bellin, 142-143.

Bellin's discussion of formal institutions with the goals of incorporating civil society is most useful for thinking about the institutional factors that might mediate between the state and the media. Challenges to existing institutional patterns of control are not just seen as a result of rising new media like the Internet, but also within the existing print media. Many authoritarian regimes own and operate much of the media within the borders of their country. State-owned media is the extreme example of embedding this social force in the state.

Today, Daniela Stockmann and Mary Gallagher report authoritarian regimes are increasing the levels of commercialization allowed in their domestic media.[43] The two authors argue that China and other regimes allow, and even encourage, media commercialization; while the proportion of state-owned media declines, institutions retain power over new newspapers and television stations. The boundaries of discourse expand slightly, thereby increasing public trust in the media, but the core content remains the same.[44] Commercialization does shift the balance of state-society relations, but this should not be interpreted as a sign of democratization or even a rise in "anti-regime sentiment."[45]

In conclusion, institutional mechanisms are an important way for states to reduce the costs of repression. Institutions, like those in China, continue to constrain the

[43] Daniela Stockmann and Mary E. Gallagher, "Remote Control: How the Media sustains Authoritarian Rule in China," paper presented at Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin (24 Feb 2009); SEE ALSO: Daniela Stockmann "Media Commercialization under Authoritarianism: Does Regime Type Matter for Liberalization?" paper presented at 2009 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (1-5 April, 2009).

[44] Stockmann and Gallager, 6-8.

[45] Stockmann and Gallagher, 24.

commercial press at levels similar but not identical to those in the state owned media. Unlike their counterparts who write for independent or state-owned newspapers, bloggers will be less embedded in state institutions. Where institutions are not as effective, states must pay the higher costs associated with repression.

Conflict: Civil war and movement repression

Studies of war and movement repression fall under the general heading of conflict. Both areas of study contain lessons for understanding repressive action against journalists and bloggers. State repression against non-violent social movements appears very different from classical civil wars between similarly equipped and staffed armies. Civil wars, however, are often fought between asymmetrically armed groups, making the line between a guerilla force engaged in civil war with the state and a social movement that employs violent tactics a blurry one.

Stathis Kalyvas tackles a number of big questions in his recent book on violence during civil war. The model he develops to explain "selective violence," offers insight into the states' repressive actions against journalists. Kalyvas defines violence as "the deliberate infliction of harm on … noncombatants or civilians" and includes a wide range of behaviors under this definition: "Pillage, robbery, vandalism, arson, forcible displacement, kidnapping, hostage taking, detention, beating, torture, mutilation, rape and desecration of dead bodies."[46] Often during war these acts are carried out to gain control

[46] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*)New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19-20.

over territory and encourage certain behavior among the populace.[47] Other times, however, dissidents are targeted because of actions they have already taken against a particular armed force. It is this phenomenon that Kalyvas terms "selective violence."[48]

Kalyvas argues that there are two main, interrelated determinants of selective violence during civil wars: territorial *control* and availability of *information*. Each side in a war will have full, or near full, control over some physical territory. Where a side has support and power, few civilians are likely to defect and thereby become potential targets of selective violence. Outside of these strongholds, the proportion of power each side wields will vary and where control is lower the costs involved in seeking out a particular transgressor are higher. Control also impacts the rate of denunciation, the main source of information; civilians are most likely to denounce when the force they aid has a preponderance of control over their territory. Thus, the armed forces will engage in the highest levels of selective violence in territory where they hold the majority, but not all of the power because in these areas information will be plentiful and the costs of violence will be low.[49]

In stable authoritarian regimes, with the occasional exception of certain regions, territorial control is reasonably high. The ability of states to gather information about journalists and bloggers, however, does vary. In order to target a specific journalist or blogger the regime must know about the offense, its presumably dangerous content, know who wrote it and know where to find them. Many have argued that the Internet enables

[47] Ibid., 26-28.
[48] Ibid., 173.
[49] Ibid., 195-207.

individuals to more easily share their ideas without divulging their identities.[50] Journalists working in the print media may also choose to protect their identities, particularly when bringing a dangerous story to light. Therefore, we may expect the state to have more difficulty learning about and using selective violence against any journalist or blogger who writes anonymously.

Christian Davenport's extensive body of work on state violence addresses somewhat different phenomena, but offers similar insight. In one article, he finds that the actions of the social movement impact when regimes choose to employ repression against social movements. States are more likely to repress a social movement when the frequency of protests increases or the variety of strategies used by the movement to express dissent increases. In addition to the raw frequency with which groups engage in protests, social movements that protest more frequently than the culturally accepted threshold will more likely find themselves victims of state repression.[51]

Bloggers and print journalists, especially those who author op-ed columns, frequently take on a particular issue area or write from a particular political ideology. Many further maintain alliances with political parties or social movements that work for the same ideas and causes. By lending their support to those who organize contentious politics against the regime, these journalists and bloggers are in effect adding to the

[50] Bimber, 151.

[51] Davenport, Christian. "Multi-Dimensional Threat Perception and State Repression: An Inquiry Into Why States Apply Negative Sanctions." *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no.3 (August 1995): 683-713.

tactics through which the parties and movements are challenging the regime. In doing so, these individuals increase the chance that the state will use repression against them.

Conclusions and Hypotheses

This chapter has examined the ways in which current political science literature can elucidate our understanding about why and when authoritarian regimes employ repressive action against journalists. In particular I have examined two relationships, first, that between institutions and repression and, second, that between conflict and repression to explore how they might inform the patterns of repression against journalists across different media. Three hypotheses can be derived from this discussion; they are:

H_1: Because states use less coercive power to control groups they have co-opted, journalists working in media embedded in state institutions will experience less repression.

H_2: States must know the identity of an individual in order to carry out 'selective violence,' therefore journalists that write anonymously are less likely to be victims of state repression.

H_3: Social movements and opposition parties that employ various strategies to challenge the power of the state invite punishment; therefore states will be more likely to punish those journalists with ties to social movements or political parties.

These three hypotheses will be tested in the next chapter by examining the ways in which the Egyptian state deploys repression against print journalists and bloggers.

Chapter 2: Evidence and Analysis

On the 25th of January 2007 an Egyptian court sentenced a blogger to jail for the first time. Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman, a twenty-four year old Alexandria-native, known on his blog as Kareem Amer, began a four year stint in the Borg al-Arab prison: three years were punishment for insulting Islam and the remaining year was for insulting the president. Suleiman spent the two and a half months between his initial arrest and the beginning of his trial in solitary confinement and his family was denied visitation rights.[52] Similar conditions were enforced between the first trial and the time when the appeals court issued its decision, upholding the ruling of the lower court.[53] Two-years into his prison term, according to Reporters Without Borders, this young man had not once been allowed to see his parents.[54]

Less than a year after this benchmark event, the Egyptian government accused one of the country's most prominent print journalists, Ibrahim Issa, of insulting the president and making false statements about his health. Issa is an editor at *al-Dustour*, a daily independent newspaper published in Cairo. He spent the next year free on bail awaiting the decisions of the criminal court – six months and a fine – and the appeals

[52] "Egyptian Court Sentences Blogger to 4 Years in Prison," *Agence France Presse – English* (22 Feb 2007).
[53] "Egypt Court Rejects Blogger Appeal," *Agence France Presse – English* (12 Mar 2007).
[54] "Rights Group Calls for Egypt Blogger's Release," *Agence France Presse – English* (5 Nov 2008).

court, which reduced the prison term to two months.[55] A few days after the appeals court decision, before Issa was taken to jail, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak issued a pardon.[56]

On their face these two examples of state repression are very different. Suleiman is a young blogger who sought to protect his identity, while Issa is an established and well-respected journalist. Suleiman was incarcerated and isolated during his trial and after his conviction. Issa, on the other hand, never saw the inside of a prison cell, thanks in part, to the direct intervention of the Egyptian president.

The similarities between these two stories, however, should not be overlooked. Sulieman and Issa were punished, different outcomes aside, through the legal system under the strong libel laws found in Egypt. More substantively they do not present instances of variation on two of the three hypotheses I present above. Neither man was embedded in the state, nor is either an active member of an opposition party or social movement.

In this chapter I explore the similarities and differences in cases of state repression in light of the hypotheses posed above. I first examine the recent character of contentious politics and the state of the media environment in Egypt. Second, I present data gathered from three western wire services – Agence France Press, Associated Press, and United Press International. These news outlets reported on fifty two cases of state

[55] "Egypt Editor Jailed Over Mubarak Health Rumours," *Agence France Press – English* (28 Sep 2008).

[56] "Egypt President Pardons News Editor Sentenced to Jail," *Agence France Press – English* (6 Oct 2008).

repression against journalists and bloggers over the five years from 2004 through 2008. This period encompasses the birth of a new social movement, The Egyptian Movement for Change – Kefaya – and emergence of blogging as a political phenomenon. The variation I observe between the experiences of these journalists or bloggers, including Suleiman and Issa, the two most covered cases, sheds light on the hypotheses presented above.

The Egyptian Political Climate: Rise of a new protest culture

The first decade of the twenty-first century in Egypt was marked by a period of high political activism. The new protest culture pushed the boundaries of acceptable political speech. Journalists, as observers and sometimes as participants, were caught up in the crackdowns triggered by these events. The data collected for this paper cover five years of this period of contention, 2004 through 2008. This section will briefly provide some historical context for the events of these years, before exploring those of concern in more depth.

Protests are not a new phenomenon in Egypt, although their prominence has waxed and waned through out the country's history. In considering the period after the 1952 Free Officers Revolution, the contentious politics of the 1970s provide the strongest parallel to the events of the twenty-first century. In the early-1970s there was a very active student movement agitating for confrontation with Israel.[57] After the war in 1973,

[57] Paul Schemm, "Sparks of Activist Spirit in Egypt," *Middle East Report Online* (13 Apr 2002) available at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero041302.html [last accessed 1 Aug 2009]; Asef Bayat, "The

the tenor of the protests changed and the students voiced criticisms of the political and economic situation in Egypt.

The 1979 university law and the 1981 imposition of a state of emergency severely restricted protest activity to non-public spaces. The state allows protestors to gather inside the walls of universities, mosques, political party offices and professional syndicates. With a few exceptions, the police have not entered the grounds of these institutions to break up protests. Instead, the police are deployed around the buildings and campuses during these events to prevent agitators from spilling into the streets and encouraging others to join in.[58]

Brief periods of protest continued to occur, despite these legal changes. Economic grievances and international events triggered occasional moments of contention during the 1980s and 1990s.[59] Unlike these more isolated events, the contentious politics of the current century follow a pattern similar to those of the 1970s; the first demonstrations were triggered by international events and later protesters took up issues of domestic Egyptian politics, in doing so they expanded the limits of public debate.

The Second Intifada began in fall of 2000, this new wave of violence between the Palestinians and the Israelis provoked outrage across the Arab and Muslim world.

"Street" and the Politics of Dissent in the Arab World," *Middle East Report* 226 (Spring 2003) available at: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer226/226_bayat.html [last accessed 1 Aug 2009].

[58] Eberhard Kienle, *A Grand Delusion: Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 90; Paul Schemm, "Egypt Struggles to Control Anti-War Protests," *Middle East Report Online* (31 Mar 2003) available at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero033103.html [last accessed 1 Aug 2009]; Schemm (2002).

[59] Bayat.

Students in Cairo reacted quickly, holding protests in support of the Palestinians and attempting to march on the Israeli Embassy in the October 2000. This round of protests, however, quickly faded.[60] Passions were reignited in Egypt and elsewhere when the Israelis began a new offensive and invaded Ramallah in March 2002. A number of the protests held in Alexandria and Cairo brought out 9,000 to 10,000 participants. According to one report, the Cairene participants came from a broader swath of society than previous protests; students from smaller and less politically active student bodies marched along side students from Cairo and Ain Shams Universities.[61]

A year later, in March of 2003, the United States invaded Iraq, prompting another round of protests in Egypt and other Arab countries, as well as many other places around the world. On March 20 an unusual crowd, composed of "stylish AUC students, hardened activists, Islamists and passersby" took over the main downtown square in Cairo, closing the normally congested traffic circle to traffic.[62] The protest was in part aimed at the United States. Demonstrators did push toward the American Embassy, not far from the square, but were held back by Egyptian police and security forces.[63]

The protest on this day went further and broke an unwritten rule of political speech in Egypt. Criticism of policies, parliament and the bureaucracy is acceptable and accusations of corruption in these quarters are often quite vibrant. The President and his

[60] Schemm (2002).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Schemm (2003).
[63] Ibid.

family, however, are generally understood to be off limits to public criticism.[64] Those protesting the Iraq war yelled slogans calling for Mubarak to leave office, explaining that "'millions hate him.'"[65] The next day police attempted to keep the protesters away from the square, an attempt which resulted in clashes between security forces and demonstrators across the downtown area. Later in the day these groups converged, marched down a main thoroughfare along the Nile, burned a photograph of Mubarak in front of the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), and were only just turned away before reaching the American embassy.[66]

Over the next year, the capital city continued to see demonstrations protesting the Iraq war and events in Palestine. Protests began at major universities, including the important Islamic institution of al-Azhar, and also at professional syndicates, many of which are known for their ties to the Society of Muslim Brothers.[67] The continuing protests were more staid than those of March 20 and 21. They were fueled by international events and economic hardship due to the devaluation of the Egyptian pound in 2003.[68]

In the fall of 2004 a new phenomenon, perhaps best described as a diffuse social movement, was born in Egypt. The Egyptian Movement for Change (EMC), the central

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[64] Kienle, 2-3; William A. Rugh, *Arab Mass Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television in Arab Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).

[65] Schemm (2003); Mona El-Ghobashy, "Egypt's Summer of Discontent," *Middle East Report Online* (18 Sep 2003) available at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero091803.html [last accessed: 1 Aug 2009].

[66] Schemm (2003).

[67] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Tamin Moustafa, "Protests Hint at New Chapter in Egyptian Politics," *Middle East Report Online* (9 Apr 2004) available at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero040904.html [last accessed: 1 Aug 2009].

[68] Moustafa.

organization in the loose association of political organizations identified by the popular slogan Kefaya! (Enough!), was founded by a group of individuals who represent a broad spectrum of politics in Egypt.[69] The leadership of the EMC is principally composed of nationalists and leftists, but it includes men from across the Egyptian political spectrum.[70] The affiliated groups deepen the political, social and religious diversity of the EMC.[71] The common factor uniting the leadership of these groups is previous political experience; many were student leaders during the protests of the 1970s.[72]

The EMC, along with associated groups, began staging demonstrations in December 2004. The first of these was small, 500 to 1,000 protesters, but "it was the first rally ever convened solely to demand that Mubarak step down and refrain from handing over power to his son."[73] The organizations under the Kefaya umbrella continued to organize protests, with varying levels of success, in response to the actions of the regime over the next few years.

During 2005, the organizations under the EMC and the Society of Muslim Brothers (SMB) occasionally coordinated to plan joint-protests. The SMB, the largest opposition party, is "illegal but tolerated [and] has uneasy relations with the

[69] Michaelle Browers, "The Egyptian Movement for Change: Intellectual Antecedents and Generational Conflict," *Contemporary Islam* 1 (2007), 71-73.
[70] Manar Shorbagy, "The Egyptian Movement for Change-Kefaya: Redefining Politics in Egypt," *Public Culture* 19:1 (2007), 185.
[71] Browers, 73.
[72] Shorbagy, 181.
[73] Mona El-Ghobashy, "Egypt Looks Ahead to a Portentous Year," *Middle East Report Online* (2 Feb 2005), available at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero020205.html [last accessed: 2 Dec 2009].

government."[74] The SMB held a rally on March 27, which EMC members attended. It was party's first-ever public criticism of Mubarak. The state responded with force at the rally and imprisoned a number of the "middle generation" SMB leaders. These individuals are known to be the strongest voices within the SMB in favor of cooperation with more secular opposition parties and movements.[75] The relationship between the Brothers and the EMC waxed and waned over the next few years, but the state appeared concerned by the new level of criticism voiced by the illegal party and continued the heightened level of repression against the party's members. In addition, the historic political success the party enjoyed in the 2005 parliamentary elections gave the regime another reason to continue to crackdown on the Brothers.[76]

A variety of domestic events continued to fuel the contentious behavior of these groups between 2005 and 2008. In 2005, a constitutional referendum, presidential and parliamentary elections provided a focus for the activities of protesters. A second round of constitutional amendments in 2006, which appear to respond to the contentious politics of the preceding years, also precipitated a response from the social movements.[77] In addition to electoral politics, textile workers engaged in a large number of strikes during

[74] Joshua Stacher, "Egypt: The Anatomy of Succession," *Review of African Political Economy* 35:2 (2008), 310.

[75] Browers, 73-4.

[76] Marc Lynch, "The Brotherhood's Dilemma," *Brandeis University: Middle East Brief* 25 (Jan 2008), 3-4.

[77] Browers, 69; Nathan J. Brown and Michele Dunne, "A Textual Analysis" in "Egypt's Controversial Constitutional Amendments," ed. Nathan J. Brown, Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 23 Mar 2007), 1-3; Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron, "The 2007 Constitutional Amendments in Egypt, and Their Implications on the Balance of Power," *Arab Law Quarterly* 22 (2008), 399.

this period. The Cairo-based social movements organized protests in support of these workers.[78]

Journalists, working in print and other media, were both observers and participants in the contentious politics described above. Demonstrators frequently gathered at professional syndicates; the Press Syndicate in particular, was a common locale for protests. In Egypt, many opposition parties, as well as the NDP, publish newspapers. Their reporters, therefore, are understood to be aligned with a particular political perspective. Additionally, the role of the Internet is often discussed as an important facet in the rise of this protest culture. EMC and SMB members have used blogs and Facebook to publicize and coordinate protest activities. The political changes described above, then, are interconnected with the media environment and the state's perception of journalists.

The Egyptian Media Environment: A period of flux and rising diversity

As with the level of protests, the period of study is particularly vibrant in light of the variable relationship between the state and the Egyptian media across time. Additionally, 2004 marks the emergence of the political blogging phenomenon in Egypt; Suleiman began blogging in February 2004 and the EMC set up its website later in the

[78] Joel Benin, "Underbelly of Egypt's Neoliberal Agenda," *Middle East Report Online* (2 Apr 2008) available at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero040508.html [last accessed: 6 Aug 2009]; Joel Benin, "The Militancy at Mahalla al-Kubra" *Middle East Report Online* (29 Sep 2007) available at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero092907.html [last accessed: 6 Aug 2009]; Aaron Reese, "Framing April 6: Discursive dominance in the Egyptian print media," in *Arab Media and Society* (Spring 2009) available at: http://www.arabmediasociety.com/countries/index.php?c_article=202 [last accessed: 22 Nov 2009].

same year.[79] This section will trace the relationship between the state and more traditional print and broadcast media and then turn to the developments of the Egyptian 'blogosphere.'

The Egyptian state's close relationship to the news media dates to the first Arabic language newspapers printed in the first half of the nineteenth century.[80] A century later, during the interwar years, newspapers associated with political parties engaged in fierce criticism of one another, even if they did not question the *raison d'être* of the state.[81] The Free Officers regime, who first took power in 1952, dramatically reduced the diversity of information in the print media. The regime itself published most of the newspapers available after they took power.[82]

Sadat loosened some restrictions on the press and Mubarak's government oversaw a marked increase in the vitality of the press. Under Sadat, the government legalized opposition political parties and allowed them to publish their own newspapers. The government licensed over 300 independent newspapers and magazines, many of which were published by religious organizations.[83]

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[79] Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman's blog, which appears to include all of his posts remains available at: http://karam903.blogspot.com/ [last accessed: 22 Nov 2009].

[80] William A. Rugh, *The Arab Press: News Media and Political Process in the Arab World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 6.

[81] Rugh (2004), 149; Jon B. Alterman, *New Media, New Politics? From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 5.

[82] Rugh (2004), 149-151; Alterman, 5; Hussein Amin, "Freedom as a Value in Arab Media: Perceptions and Attitudes Among Journalists," *Political Communication* 19 (2002), 126.

[83] Hussein Amin and James Napoli, "Media and power in Egypt," in *De-Westernizing Media Studies*, edited by James Curran and Myung-Jin Park (New York: Routledge, 2000) 158-159; Rugh (2004), 156-157.

Although the available forums for public speech and the acceptable topics expanded under Mubarak, limits on political speech remained in place. The Emergency Laws enacted in 1981 after the assassination of Sadat remains in place. These laws give Mubarak institutional justification to engage in "prepublication censorship, confiscation of newspapers, and [the] closing down of publications."[84] In 1995, the state amended the Penal Code and dramatically increased the punishment for journalists who published false or libelous information. The state repealed this changed the following year in response to strong objections from the Press Syndicate.[85] In Eberhard Kiele's estimation, however, the state bowed to the demands of the journalists only because "more discreet" methods of punishing offending journalists were in place.[86] Another amendment to the Penal Code regarding journalists was passed in 2006; it limited the jail time to which judges may sentence journalists, but expanded the scope of journalistic crimes.[87] The legal approach to 'censorship' by the Egyptian state, while not its only tactic, has become increasingly prevalent since the mid-1990s.[88]

Some publications circumvented the Egyptian government's restrictions on the media by registering their newspapers and magazines abroad. A law predating the 1952 Free Officers coup enabled publications denied licenses by the Mubarak regime to register in foreign countries. The number independent Egyptian publications that choose

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[84] Amin, 130.
[85] Kienle, 198-101.
[86] Ibid., 100.
[87] Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Journalists Still Risk Jail Under Press Law" available at: http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2006/07/10/egypt-journalists-still-risk-jail-under-press-law [last accessed 22 Nov 2009]; Jeffrey Black, "Egypt's Press: More free, still fettered," in *Arab Media and Society* (Winter 2008) available at: http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=572 [last accessed 22 Nov 2009].
[88] Rugh (1979), 28-29; Rugh (2004), 26.

this path grew appreciably in the 1990s. These publications, however, enjoyed a greater freedom to share information for only a short period of time. In 1997 and 1998 the Ministry of Information intervened and prevented many of these publications from circulating in Egypt.[89]

Broadcast media – television and radio – enjoy fewer freedoms than printed media, although changes also came to this segment of the media in the 1990s. Hussein Amin posits that the lower level of freedom accorded to radio and television media, a trend seen across the Arab Middle East, is tied to literacy levels.[90] Less than three quarters of Egyptian adults can read and write, yet all adults, as well as children, can consume television and radio broadcasts.[91] As a result, Egypt and other states have come to rely primarily on these media to "promote their political, religious, cultural, and economic programs." The state continues to produce much of the radio and television content available in Egypt today.[92]

The regime allowed increasing levels of commercialization of the television industry in the 1990s, as it did with print media. The rationale for the commercialization seen in broadcast media has, in part, different reasons; the changes in television ownership coincided with the rise of satellite television, increasing the competition faced by Egyptian state television. Commercialization of terrestrial broadcasting was followed by the birth of the first privately owned Egyptian satellite television station, Dream TV,

[89] Kienle, 105-106.
[90] Amin, 126.
[91] "Egypt," *The CIA World Factbook*, available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html [last accessed: 26 Jul 2009].
[92] Amin, 126; Lila Abu Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood: the Politics of Television in Egypt* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 196.

in 2001. The state maintains a small share of ownership, likely around ten percent, in this station and the other satellite channels that emerged later.[93]

Egypt connected to the Internet in the early 1990s, as satellite television was becoming popular. The first official connection was made in 1993. Four years later, in 1997, the state allowed the public at large to connect to the Internet.[94] In 2009, more than twelve and a half million Egyptians, or almost sixteen percent of the population, are Internet users.[95] Moreover, Internet access is widely available in urban centers; Internet cafes are abundant and free, wireless Internet is available at every upscale, western-style café and at McDonalds in Cairo. Finally, the information gathered and the ideas shared Egyptian bloggers reach a wider audience through the print media; some newspapers frequently cite bloggers in their stories, including *al-Dustour*, the newspaper for which Ibrahim Issa writes and edits.[96]

Many Arab countries, like Egypt, were slow to provide Internet access to their general citizenry. Also, many keep the price of connection artificially high to limit the number of people with the means to access the new medium.[97] The wariness of these actions indicates that regimes in the region had concerns about their ability to control the information shared via the Internet. Egypt, however, departs company from the majority

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[93] Abu Lughod., 198.

[94] Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas, *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 122.

[95] *Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics* available at: http://www.Internetworldstats.com/stats.htm [last accessed: 22 Nov 09].

[96] Marc Lynch, "Blogging the New Arab Public," *Arab Media & Society* (Feb 2007) available at: http://www.arabmediasociety.com/ [last accessed 5 Aug 2009], 5.; Courtney Radsch, "Core to Commonplace: The evolution of Egypt's blogosphere," *Arab Media & Society* (Sep 2008) available at: http://www.arabmediasociety.com/ [last accessed 22 Nov 2009], 6.

[97] Alterman, 37.

of its neighbors in two important ways; the government has made efforts to expand its citizens' access to the Internet and has not used filtering technology in any consistent manner.

The Egyptian state surrendered the means of direct control over the Internet. Internet service providers (ISPs) are privately owned and operated, although a public-sector company maintains control over "basic telecommunications."[98] The first private ISP was established in 1997; by 1999 there were 50 private ISPs and in 2007 the number reached 211.[99]

The Egyptian government continues to engage in programs aimed at expanding Internet access throughout the country. In the mid- and late-1990s various government and international programs provided free access around the country and taught Egyptians to use the Internet.[100] A decade later, Egypt implemented programs that provide low-cost computers to its citizens and provide dial-up Internet for only the cost of a phone call. Additionally, the government is testing a new technology that "could provide vast areas of the countryside with high-speed, wireless access."[101]

Unlike most Arab regimes Egypt has not engaged in any systematic blocking of the Internet to limit the online content that users within its borders are able to access. The OpenNet Initiative, funded by a collection of academic centers focusing on the study of the Internet and politics, conducted tests in forty countries to determine if domestic or

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[98] Kalathil and Boas, 122.

[99] Kalathil and Boas, 122; Ronald Diebert, et al., eds., *Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 277.

[100] Kalathil and Boas, 122-123.

[101] Deibert, et al., 277.

international websites with controversial information were blocked.[102] The researchers in Egypt, testing from different locations and across time, were able to access all the politically, socially and militarily sensitive websites on their list. In short, Egyptian Internet users, unlike many of their Arab neighbors, are able to use any email provider they choose. Additionally, they can read reports published by local and foreign NGOs about the human rights violations in Egypt and news reports about the territorial conflicts in southeast Egypt. Internet users within the boundaries of the Egyptian state also have access to other sites access unavailable in other authoritarian countries.[103]

There are reports which indicate unfettered access to the Internet in Egypt is already being circumscribed. To date, the efforts by the regime appear to be temporary interruptions, targeted at political opposition groups. The SMB maintains the government blocked access to its website, ikhwanonline.com, three times between 2004 and 2007. In 2007, the webmasters of the opposition party circumvented this restriction by changing the IP address associated with the URL of their website.[104] In 2008, the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information corroborated the EMC's claim that one of the principle Internet service providers in Egypt was blocked access to its website, harakamasria.org.[105]

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[102] Ibid., 5-27.
[103] Ibid., 278.
[104] "Experts: Blocking Ikhwanweb Confirms Egyptian Regime Bankruptcy" Ikhwanweb (7 Jan 2007) available at: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=2714&SectionID=120 [last accessed 31 Jul 09]
[105] "Egypt: Coincide Hosting the Largest Communication Conference in Africa, an opposition's Web Site is being Blocked Egyptian Government should Unblock Kefaya Homepage" The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (12 May 2008) available at: http://www.anhri.net/en/reports/2008/pr0512.shtml [last accessed: 31 Jul 09].

The Egyptian regime's attempts to control Internet use through intimidation and repression appear to be more common than the technological methods that surfaced recently. The first cases recorded case in which Egypt used it coercive arm to punish Internet users who had violated 'acceptable' parameters of social and political use occurred in 2001.[106] A number of homosexual men, entrapped by the state, were among the early victims.[107] The next year a new department was established within the Ministry of the Interior to search for online criminal activities, including journalists in violation of the country's strict libel laws. The existence Department for Combating Computer and Internet Crimes, known colloquially as the "Internet police," was not publicly announced until 2004, two years after its creation.[108]

Quantifying the active political blogs in Egypt is an imprecise enterprise, as is generalizing about their authors. The Berkman Center for Internet and Society, in a study of the Arab Blogosphere counted 35,000 active blogs, about a third of which are authored by Egyptians. In a more detailed study of 4,000 of these blogs, the authors of this study confirmed the common wisdom that Arab bloggers are predominantly young men.[109] Many bloggers write primarily about their personal lives or non-political topics. Marc Lynch estimated that were a few thousand political blogs in the Arab world in 2006.[110] If

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[106] Gamal Eid, "Egypt: A False Freedom" in *The Internet In the Arab World: A New Space of Repression?* available at: http://anhri.net/en/reports/net2004/egypt.shtml [last accessed: 3 Jul 2009]

[107] Ibid.; Kalathil and Boas, 123.

[108] Eid.

[109] Bruce Etling, John Kelly, Robert Faris, and John Palfrey, "Mapping the Arab Blogosphere: Politics Culture and Dissent," *Berkman Center Research Publication* No. 2009-06, 3-4, 15; Isherwood, 3.

[110] Marc Lynch (Feb 2007), 5.

his estimation and the Berkman Center's study are correct, they indicate that approximately thousand active, politically-oriented bloggers in exist Egypt.

The rise of blogging and the EMC in Egypt overlapped in 2004 and 2005. Early bloggers in Egypt, like those in other places, often authored their blogs in English rather than Arabic and favored secular liberal political positions. These individuals provided information on the EMC's early protests to western human rights organizations and media outlets. The EMC, further, harnessed the Internet to organize protests and share other information.[111]

The SMB bloggers emerged soon after those of Kefaya became popular. These individuals began their blogs in response to state repression. In 2005 and 2006 the state restricted access to public spaces at universities where the young Brothers had previously been active, in response some went online to share their thoughts.[112] Interestingly, the Berkman Center study found that, of the 4,000 Arab blogs it closely examined, more Egyptian bloggers who express positions in favor of political Islam provide their real name (about 78%) than other subsets of Arab bloggers.[113] Additionally, after the state began its crackdowns against the SMB, a number of blogs emerged that campaigned for the release of imprisoned SMB members.[114]

The blogs have sometimes been a means of communication and exchange of ideas between the younger cohorts of the secular left and political Islam. The members of the

[111] Isherwood, 1; Lynch (Feb 2007), 12; Radsch, 1-3.
[112] Isherwood, 5.
[113] Etling, et al., 19.
[114] Isherwood, 5; Radsch, 7.

SMB who blog are often more similar to their liberal counterparts than they are to the less affluent youth of the organization; they have Internet access and watch satellite television, many of the SMB bloggers also speak English or another European language and have travelled abroad. These cultural similarities and shared opposition to the likelihood that Gamal Mubarak will succeed his father as the President of Egypt have kept some lines of communication open between these two camps. Additionally, some bloggers are supportive of campaigns to release their fellow bloggers from prison.[115] Other SMB bloggers, however, have defined themselves against the Kefaya-aligned blogging community. The SMB bloggers see themselves as different with regard to ideology and also because they write in standard Arabic rather than for writing in English or Egyptian colloquial Arabic.[116]

The relationship between opposition movements and blogging creates a particular problem in looking at instances of repression against journalists. Isherwood warns his readers to recognize that bloggers who are arrested or otherwise harassed at protests are unlikely being targeted as bloggers. Instead, they are being treated like their fellow protesters. The blogging subgroup simply has a medium for sharing their stories that others with similar experiences do not.[117] Yet, Isherwood alternately points out that association with activists is not the same as activism itself. Wael Abbas writes one of the most popular political blogs in the Egyptian blogosphere and is often associated with the EMC, whose protests he has covered in detail on his blog with photographs and videos,

[115] Lynch (Feb 2007).
[116] Isherwood, 5-6.
[117] Ibid., 11.

as well as text. Isherwood describes Abbas' blog as "a favorite of opposition activists," but also notes that "the blog itself reveals a stunning lack of activism."[118]

Counting Repression Against Journalists

To test the hypotheses laid out in Chapter One, I gathered newswire stories of instances in which journalists experienced state repression in Egypt. During the five years in question, 2004 through 2008, I found 60 cases of repression against journalists of all types in Egypt reported by the Associated Press (AP), Agence France Press (AFP) and United Press International (UPI). In this section I examine the cases of the fourteen bloggers and 38 were newspaper reporters who experienced state repression during this period. The eight television reporters who also experienced repression are excluded from the analysis below.

Bloggers do not numerically out number journalists as victims of repression in Egypt between 2004 through 2008, but the state appears target those using the Internet to share information at a higher rate. I estimate that there around a thousand active, politically-oriented Egyptian bloggers. In the sphere of print media, it was recently reported that there are about 5,100 members of the Egyptian Press Syndicate.[119] Print journalists outnumber bloggers roughly five to one, but as victims of reported repression the ratio falls to three to one. The data collected from the wire service reports, suggests

[118] Ibid., 7.

[119] "Happening only in Egypt: Press Syndicate refuse to accept membership!" The Arab Network for Human Rights, (19 Mar 2008) available at: http://www.anhri.net/en/reports/pr0318.shtml. As the report indicated, not all print journalists are members of the Press Syndicate, young journalists and those working for independent papers are frequently excluded. The underestimate that this produces is appropriate here, as sets up a stronger test of the trend discussed by the CPJ.

that a greater percentage of bloggers experience state repression their counterparts in print journalism.

I propose three hypotheses that might explain this trend. In the first, I expected journalists and bloggers who are not embedded in state institutions would be targeted more than those who are embedded. Two pieces of evidence lend support to this hypothesis. In the five year period examined here, there was only one case of repression against a journalist at a state-controlled newspaper. In 2004, Ahmed Ezzedin, a reporter for the weekly *al-Usbu,* was sentenced to two years in prison for accusing the Agriculture Minister of corruption.[120] The state and the NDP control the content of papers such *al-Gumhuriya* and *al-Ahram,* so it is unsurprising that their reporters do not experience repression. Nonetheless, as the most embedded written media, if reporters from these papers did experience repression, it would be evidence against the hypothesis about the relationship between corporatism and repression.

Additionally, foreign journalists have been targets of state repression. The wire services report that two print journalist, one from the *Los Angeles Times* and the second from *al-Sharq al-Awsat,* experience repression at the hands of the Egyptian state. Additionally, three reporters for *al-Jazeera* – a foreign satellite channel – were among the eight television reporters excluded from the study. These individuals are not embedded in the state; their editors, unworried about loosing the newspaper license to publish or the

[120] "Egypt Journalists' Union Calls on Mubarak to Pardon Jailed Reporter" *Agence France Presse – English* (17 Jun 2004).

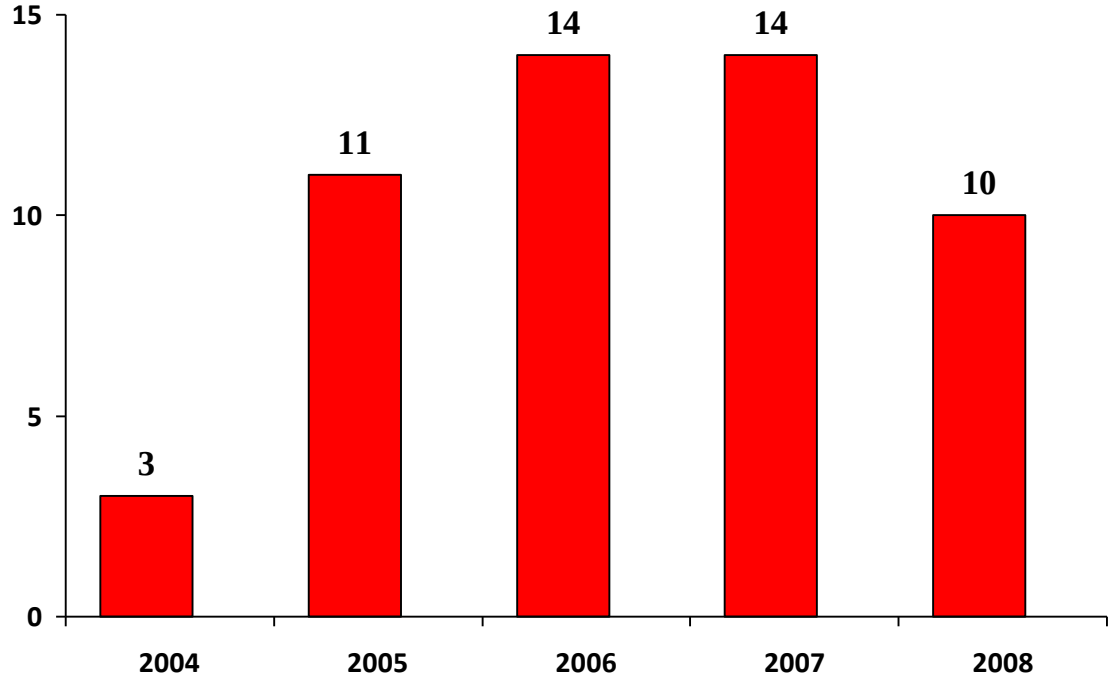
station's license to broadcast, are unlikely to curb the writings of their journalists at the behest of the Egyptian state.

In the second hypothesis I posit that the state requires information to target journalists; thus, those who write anonymously are less likely to experience repression. Among the cases gathered, only two bloggers sought to keep their identities hidden prior to experiencing repression. Suleiman, who blogged as Kareem Amer, is one of the two bloggers who adopted a pseudonym. Few journalists or bloggers appear to write anonymously, but without more data, there is little evidence to either support or refute this hypothesis.[121]

The final hypothesis concerns the relationship journalists and bloggers might maintain with social movements and opposition parties. Variations in the number of repressive actions reported across time provide some evidence in support of this hypothesis. This dataset begins in 2004, the year in which blogging and the EMC emerge as political phenomena in Egypt. The rise in reprisals against journalists and bloggers appears to be tied to the emergence of the EMC and the period of contentious politics that this group initiated. The social movement was started in December 2004; less than six percent of the instances of repression happened in 2004. Fourteen instances of repression, the highest annual rate, were reported by the wire services in each 2006 and 2007.

[121] Lynch (Feb 2007).

FIGURE 1: Yearly Instances of Repression



Data compiled from Lexis-Nexis searches of the Associated Press, Agence France Press, and United Press International for stories about "journalists" and "bloggers" in Egypt between 01 January 2004 and 31 December 2008.

Additionally, the instances of repression cluster around periods of active contentious politics. More than one third of these cases occurred in just two of the sixty months examined in this study. Eight cases of repression (15%) were recorded in May 2006, when opposition forces held protests relating to the constitutional amendments passed in that year. Nine cases of repression (17%) were reported in September 2007; textile workers held major strikes in this month.

Studying journalists and bloggers affiliated with social movements and opposition parties raises a number of concerns. Specifically it raises the question: Where is the line between attending a protest as a journalist to report on the event and to participate? A

journalist's presence at a rally makes it difficult to identify the reason the individual experienced repression; a journalist or blogger might be repressed at a protest irrespective of their published writings. With this in mind, I have excluded those reported instances of repression where journalists and bloggers were treated like those who surrounded them at a protest. Even with this cautionary correction, just over fifteen percent of the fifty two print journalists and bloggers were repressed while present at a protest or strike. This evidence provides some tentative support for the argument that journalists and bloggers allied with social movements experience higher levels of repression than their non-aligned counterparts.

Finally, I highlight an interesting and unexpected finding concerning the type of repression used by the state. Among all cases of repression, extra-legal arrest under the State of Emergency and legal action are equally common. For those 52 cases concerning print journalists and bloggers, sixty percent are subject to legal action but only forty are arrested. These two forms of repression are not mutually exclusive, but it appears that there is little overlap. The state, often fails to enforce the prison sentences of journalists, indicating that the trials serve as punishment in and of themselves. Moreover, the state may use trials as a warning to other journalists about what lines should not be crossed.

Conclusions

In this chapter, a review of the political and media environments in Egypt and an analysis of the data have highlighted a number of important points. The state allowed diversification of the print and television media. Satellite dishes and the Internet, in

particular, have brought swift changes to the ways in which information is shared Egypt. Additionally, opposition forces like the EMC and the SMB in Egypt are taking advantage of this new and dynamic media environment to make themselves heard.

The Egyptian state, however, has maintained a firm hand over journalists in this period. Repression is one tool through which the regime controls the spread of information. The analysis of news wire reports from 2004 through 2008 indicates that those who choose to share information on a blog are more frequently targeted by the state than those who write for the traditional print media. Moreover, it appears that journalists embedded in state institutions experience fewer instances of repression, while those associated with opposition groups experience more instances of repression. Finally, legal, rather than violent, tools of intimidation appear to be increasingly favored by the state as means to control the spread of information.

The significance of these findings and their implications for future research will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 3: Conclusions and areas for future research

The actions of the Egyptian government, described above, demonstrate that the authoritarian regime recognizes some degree of truth in Napoleon's cautionary quip about the relative power of newspapers and bayonets. The stories of independent journalists, like Ibrahim Issa, and bloggers, like Abdel Karem Nabil Suleiman, depict part of the state's attempt to quiet those who violate the norms of speech. This paper explored the Egyptian state's treatment of bloggers and print journalists. In this chapter I briefly review the theoretical claims and the evidence presented in the above chapters. Then, I address some of the implications of these findings in Egypt and in a wider international context.

Summary: Arguments and evidence

This paper is motivated by the CPJ finding that bloggers and others who use the Internet to share information composed the worldwide plurality of imprisoned media workers at the end of 2008. My hypotheses to explain this trend in repression rely on two literatures from within political science. The first hypothesis is derived from works on enduring authoritarianism. Authors like Eva Bellin explain that regimes incorporate social groups into state institutions to prevent these groups from challenging the regimes'

power.[122] I, therefore, expect journalists and bloggers who work for publications that are part of the state's corporate structures will be more insulated from repression.

The remaining hypotheses are built upon works about civil war and movement repression. An army or repressive state must have access to information about offenders before they target a particular journalist or blogger. Thus, I expect journalists and bloggers who publish their writings anonymously to be more insulated from repression. Additionally, Christian Davenport has found that as social movements increase the tactics they use to challenge the regime, levels of repression increase in turn.[123] One of the tactics available to social movements are methods for spreading information, like newspapers and blogs. I, therefore, expect reporters and bloggers who publish in support of social movements to experience higher levels of repression.

My examination of Egypt from 2004 through 2008 supports the international snapshot CPJ captured in its 2008 report. The English-language news wire coverage of repression against journalists in Egypt indicates that a smaller percentage of Egyptian print journalists were victims of repression than Egyptian bloggers during this period. Additionally, there is some support for the hypothesis that corporatism offers journalists and bloggers insulation from repression, while affiliation with a social movement or opposition party opens these individuals to repression. Finally, the Egyptian state frequently used court proceedings to censure journalists and bloggers. In many of these

[122] Bellin, 145.
[123] Davenport, 683-713.

cases, however, the state chose not to enforce the jail sentences that accompanied the guilty verdicts.

Egypt in Context: Technology, contentious politics and legal repression

Comparing broad trends in the forms of Internet use and the nature of repression and institutions across the Middle East and around the world, enables a fuller picture of the relationship between repression and institutions and indicates areas fruitful for further research. Variations can be seen in the permissiveness of different media environments generally. More specifically, the Internet penetration varies widely across authoritarian countries, as do government efforts to limit access to politically sensitive content. Social movements and opposition parties have employed the Internet to differing degrees, irrespective of Internet usage rates. Finally, the use of the legal system as mechanism for cracking down on free speech does not appear to be only an Egyptian trend, although the ways in which other authoritarian governments are using the courts follow a somewhat different pattern.

Internet access often seems ubiquitous in North America and Western Europe, yet even in the first world a quarter to a third of people are not online. Variations in Internet penetration vary even more widely in the third world. In comparison to other Arab countries, Egypt falls at the low end of Internet penetration along with Algeria, Syria, Oman, and Palestine where slightly more than one in ten people have access to the Internet. The Gulf States, where larger segments of the population have significant disposable incomes, boast higher levels of access. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates

are the two most wired countries in the region; more than half of their residents have Internet access.[124]

Internet usage is similarly wide in other regions where authoritarian regimes are the predominate system of government. Countries in East and Southeast Asia are compared to those of the Middle East. While a quarter of Chinese are online, nearly a third of Malaysians and Singaporeans have Internet access. Indonesians use the Internet at a rate similar to that of Egyptians. The world's lowest levels of Internet penetration can be found in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as war torn countries like Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan.[125]

The percentage of Internet users in a country, however, is not the only determinant of how much this medium affects the spread of information. Some countries, like Egypt, have kept prices artificially high to discourage access while allowing those who can afford to get online the freedom to consume and share all types of information. Other countries, Saudi Arabia and China chief among them, rely instead upon complex technologies to restrict the types of information available to the Internet users in their borders. The technological filtering approach to limiting access to online information can, of course be circumvented. The most cutting edge technological filters can be expensive. Additionally, they require constant updates to stay abreast of the latest

[124] *Internet World Stats*

[125] All comparisons rely on the 2009 estimates of Internet penetration from Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics available at: http://www.Internetworldstats.com/stats.htm [last accessed: 09 October 2009].

means of circumventing the blocks. No block is fool-proof, but as these regimes seem to recognize, they do limit the access of the average user.[126]

Even where Internet users have relatively unfettered access to the Internet, political usage cannot be assumed. The vast majority of Internet users simply go online to stay in touch with friends and family and in search of entertainment. While in all countries, political uses of the Internet are a small portion of online behavior of a population in some places social movements, opposition parties and individuals have harnessed the new tools at their disposal to challenge existing political norms.

In the Middle East, Iraqi bloggers – Salam Pax the author of *Where is Raed?* and Riverbend the author of *Baghdad Burning* – shared impacts of the U.S. occupation of Iraq.[127] Lebanese bloggers, also told their stories, during the war with Israel in the summer of 2006. Bahraini and Kuwait bloggers, like their Egyptian counterparts, have challenged state policies, organized protests and possible altered the course of politics in their countries. The Bahraini bloggers, it should be noted, have endeavored to maintain their anonymity even as they organize and attend protests, potentially providing a more fruitful case for examining the hypothesis about information, or more particularly its absence, and the levels of repression.[128]

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[126] Kalathil and Boas; Diebert, et al.

[127] The various blogs of Salam Pax are now collectively available at: http://salampax.wordpress.com/ [last accessed 09 October 2009]; Riverbend's *Baghdad Burning* is available at: http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/ [last accessed: 09 October 2009]. Additionally, edited versions of both blogs are now commercially available as books.

[128] Marc Lynch, "Blogging the New Arab Public," in *Arab Media & Society* (Sep 2008) available at: http://www.arabmediasociety.com/ [last accessed 5 Aug 2009].

Malaysia and Singapore are other countries where opponents of the regimes in these two states have engaged in online "contentious journalism."[129] Additionally, these two regimes have increasingly relied on the legal system to punish journalists. As in Egypt, the Singaporean government has deployed the legal system against print media as well as Internet journalists. Singapore and Malaysia have Sedition Acts that allow for the prosecution of anyone spreading anti-state information, broadly defined.[130] The state has made particular use of the legal system to punish foreign publications, and their reporters, including the *Asian Wall Street Journal*.[131] While George admits that these laws may have encouraged many in the main stream, domestic media to engage in self-censorship. He also notes that the most severe applications of these laws have been against "opposition members and political dissidents, rather than against professional journalists."[132]

Most of the bloggers and others who use the Internet to engage in contentious politics would appear to fall somewhere in between the categories of "professional journalists" and "opposition members." Given the threats they face, we might ask: why does this behavior emerge in some countries and not others? Surely limits to access, be they financial or technological, and threats of sanction, be they violent or legal, play a role in determining when the use of the Internet becomes a key mechanism for challenging the state. Other factors, such as the strength of opposition movements and

[129] George, 96.
[130] Ibid., 44.
[131] Gary Rodan, "Asia and the International Press: The Political Significance of Expanding Markets," in Democratization and the Media, edited by Vicky Randall (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 129-137.
[132] George, 46.

social movements likely matter as well. When are some of these determinants more important than others?

The rising prevalence of the judicial system in meting out punishment to journalists and bloggers is not the only area where the courts are garnering more attention. Nathan Brown and Mona El-Ghobashy examine how Egyptian citizens use the courts to challenge the state.[133] Additionally, Brown argues that that state uses the courts to spread the power of the central state across the state strongly and evenly.[134] The exceptional instances in which the regime uses the courts to punish journalists, however, do not fall into either of these categories. What does the regime gain from this 'judicialization' of repression? The public nature of these trials, as opposed to the much more opaque instances of extra-judicial repression, indicates that their impacts on media workers, and on the public at large, might be different. The questions about the social movements, the legal system and repression that the findings of this paper offer fruitful areas for future research.

[133] Nathan Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 237-238; Mona El-Ghobashy, "Constitutionalist Contention in Contemporary Egypt," *American Behavioral Scientist* 51, no. 11 (Jul 2008), 1593.

[134] Brown, 236-237.

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